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ABSTRACT

This study investigated the relationship between leadership style and the personality (patterns of core strengths) of school administrators as perceived by themselves and by their subordinates and colleagues. Sixty-seven principals and central office staff and 285 of their teachers and peers from 2 school systems participated in the study. Bipolar theory (J. W. Thomas 1978) posits that, given three pairs of core strengths, individuals express preference for one pole of each pair. The Leadership Effectiveness and Adaptability Description (LEAD) instruments (P. Hersey and K. Blanchard 1977) assessed the leadership styles of the principals and central office administrators. The principals recorded their self-perceptions by using the Bipolar Inventory and the LEAD-Self questionnaire. To obtain teachers' perceptions, principals randomly chose five teachers to complete the LEAD-Other questionnaire and the Bipolar Inventory B. Central office administrators followed a similar procedure. No significant relationships were found when data were statistically analyzed using the chi-square technique. A strong preference (82 percent) for the high task/high relationship leadership style was demonstrated. Leaders were ascribed the socially valued traits of risking, practical thinking, and independent risking more than such less socially valued traits as theoretical thinking--unsurprising preferences among occupants of leadership positions. The findings suggest a lack of evidence that leadership is related to personality. Recommendations include a replication of this study with a larger sample and the use of other leadership assessments and personality inventories. Two reference pages are appended. (CJH)

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Strengths and Styles of School Leaders: Is Who They Are How They Lead?

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Strengths and Styles of School Leaders:

Is Who They Are How They Lead?

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Current theories of leadership are similar in one respect. They assume that leaders bring to the leadership situation varying amounts of the traditional leadership dimensions of concern for task (getting the job done) and concern for relationships (taking care of workers' needs) (Blake & Mouton, 1964; Fiedler, 1967; Hersey & Blanchard, 1977). They differ in what they prescribe to improve the leader's effectiveness. Fiedler believes in matching leaders to situations most favorable to the leader's natural style (autocratic or democratic). Blake and Mouton argue that leaders must emphasize equally both dimensions of task and relationship. Hersey and Blanchard urge the leaders to change their behavior to fit the situation, e. g., give more direction (task behavior) when the subordinates are new to the job and increase the socio-emotional support (relationship behavior) as the followers improve their performance.

The theory of situational leadership has great intuitive appeal for educators because of its developmental approach. There are some questions about the robustness of the theory (Graeff, 1983), but it has received some prominance in educational literature (Association for Supervision and Curriculum Development, 1978; Gates, Blanchard, & Hersey, 1976; Hersey, Angelini, & Carakushansky, 1982; Walter, Caldwell, & Marshall, 1980). However, the premise that the personality of

the leader influences a preference for a leadership style has received little research attention. Efforts to relate cognitive style (Malone, 1984), conflict style (Aina, 1984; Romero, 1983), and learning style (Smith, 1981) to leadership style have been inconclusive.

Bi/Polar theory (Thomas, 1978) asserts that individuals have natural tendencies to express preferences for one pole of each of three pairs of core strengths: 1) thinking or risking, 2) practical or theoretical thinking, and 3) dependent or independent risking. Thomas believes that these tendencies may be noted in the behavior of the individual.

This study investigated the relationship of personality (patterns of core strengths), as measured by the Bi/Polar Inventory (Thomas, 1977), to the leadership styles of school administrators, as measured by the Leader Adaptability and Effectiveness Description instrument (Hersey & Blanchard, 1977). The hypotheses for the study were as follows:

Hypothesis 1: There is no significant relationship between a school administrator's predominant leadership style and the administrator's score on the Bi/Polar scale of thinking-risking.

Hypothesis 2. There is no significant relationship between a school administrator's predominant leadership style and the administrator's score on the Bi/Polar scale of practical-theoretical.

Hypothesis 3. There is no significant relationship between a school administrator's predominant leadership style and the administrator's score on the Bi/Polar scale of dependent-independent.

Method

Sample Population

Subjects were 67 principals and administrators/supervisors of two southern school districts and 285 of their teachers and associates. Forty-eight of the subjects were principals; the remaining 19 held administrative or supervisory positions in the central offices of the districts.

Instrumentation

The Leader Effectiveness and Adaptability Description (LEAD) instruments developed by Hersey and Blanchard (1977) were used to assess the leadership style of the principal or central office administrator. The LEAD-Self is a twelve item multiple choice questionnaire designed to obtain a leader's self-perception of his/her typical leadership behavior. The respondant is asked to select from four alternative actions: High Task/Low Relationship (HT/LR), High Task/High Relationship (HT/HR), Low Task/High Relationship (LT/HR), and Low Task/Low Relationship (LT/LR). The data generated provide scores for each basic style. The LEAD-Other similarly obtains the perception of subordinates or colleagues. With both instruments, style is determined by four ipsative scores. Validity of the instrument was reported by Greene (1980).

The Bi/Polar Inventory (Thomas, 1977) was used to assess the personality or core strengths of the subjects. The Inventory consists of 45 semantic differential, 7-point items which calculate three scales: Thinking-Risking, Practical-Theoretical, and Dependent-Independent. The three scale score are calculated from 15 items representing each scale. A combination of the major

strengths in the three pairs determines the Bi/Polar pattern of an individual. Bi/Polar Inventory asks for self perception and Bi/Polar Inventory B records the perception of others. Validation was reported by Mayo and Thomas (1978) and Thomas (1982).

Procedure

The Bi-Polar and the LEAD instruments were explained at a meeting of the principals and central office administrators in each of the two school systems. Participants were asked to demonstrate their willingness to be involved in the study by completing Bi/Polar Form A and LEAD-Self. The volunteers were given packets containing directions for obtaining a random sample of five teachers and/or associates who would agree to participate in the study, five copies of the LEAD-Other and Bi/Polar Inventory B, return envelopes, and instructions for the participants.

Results

Sixty-seven participants returned usable instruments reporting self-perception. The responding sample represented 81% of the total population. Other-perceptions scores were obtained for fifty-seven participants (69%) who were assessed by one to five teachers or associates. The LEAD-Self and LEAD-Other scores were averaged to provide a composite leadership score for each subject. The self perception scores were used alone when they were the only ones available. Table 1 reports the data obtained from the LEAD instruments.

Table 1

Composite of Leadership Styles as Perceived by Self and Others

Leadership Styles	Principals	Administrators /Supervisors	Total N(%)
HT/LR	1	0	1 (1.5%)
HT/HR	42	13	55 (82.1%)
LT/HR	5	4	9 (13.4%)
LT/LR	0	0	0
HT/HR & LT/HR*	0	2	2 (3.0%)

*Two subjects received equal scores for two leadership styles.

Scores from the Bi/Polar Inventory A and Bi/Polar Inventory B were averaged to form a composite Bi/Polar Score on the three scales. Again, self perception scores were used when other perception scores were lacking (Thomas, 1982). The data indicating the primary or lead strengths of the subjects are reported in Table 2.

Table 2

Lead Strengths of Principals and Administrators/Supervisors

BI/Polar Strength	Principals	Administrators /Supervisors	Total N(%)
THINKING	18	10	28 (41.8)
RISKING	30	9	39 (58.2)
PRACTICAL THINKING	43	13	56 (83.6)
THEORETICAL THINKING	5	6	11 (16.4)
DEPENDENT RISKING	19	11	30 (44.8)
INDEPENDENT RISKING	29	8	37 (55.2)

An individual's Bi/Polar pattern is determined by the combination of the lead strengths in each of the three scales. The combinations may produce eight Bi/Polar patterns. These data are found in Table 3.

Table 3

Bi/Polar Patterns of Principals and Administrators/Supervisors

Bi/Polar Pattern	Principals	Administrators /Supervisors
I THINKING, PRACTICAL, DEPENDENT	6	6
II THINKING, PRACTICAL, INDEPENDENT	9	1
III THINKING, THEORETICAL, DEPENDENT	2	1
IV THINKING, THEORETICAL, INDEPENDENT	1	2
V RISKING, PRACTICAL, DEPENDENT	10	3
VI RISKING, THEORETICAL, DEPENDENT	1	1
VII RISKING, PRACTICAL, INDEPENDENT	18	3
VIII RISKING, THEORETICAL, INDEPENDENT	1	2

The chi-square technique employed to test the three null hypotheses produced no significant results at the .05 level. The hypotheses were not rejected. No statistically significant relationship was found between the predominant leadership style of HT/HR and the Bi/Polar scales.

Discussion

No relationship was found between leadership style and the personality of the leader as measured by the Bi/Polar scales. A strong preference for one leadership style was noted. Eighty-two per cent of the subjects were described as demonstrating the

high task/high relationship style. The appropriateness of the LEAD instruments for this population sample may be questioned.

The socially valued traits (Thomas, 1982) of risking, practical thinking, and independent risking were ascribed to the leaders more than the less socially valued traits of thinking, theoretical thinking, and dependent risking. Since the subjects in this study already occupied leadership positions, it is not surprising that these traits would be ascribed to them. It is also possible that the socially valued traits are simply easier to recognize than their polar opposites. Whatever the cause, the interpretation of the findings of this study suggest a lack of evidence that leadership style is related to personality. Recommendations for further research include the suggestions that the study be replicated with a larger sample, and that other leadership assessments and other personality inventories also be used in exploring relationship between leadership style and personality.

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STRENGTHS AND STYLES OF SCHOOL LEADERS: IS WHO THEY ARE HOW THEY LEAD?

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Abstract

This study investigated the relationship between the leadership style of school administrators, as perceived by themselves and by their subordinates and colleges, and their personal strengths, as perceived by self and others. Sixty-seven principals and central office staff, and 285 of their teachers and peers from two school systems participated in the study. The principals recorded their self perceptions using two instruments, LEAD-Self and Bi-Polar Inventory A, and randomly chose five teachers to complete the LEAD-other and Bi/Polar Inventory B. Central office administrators followed a similar procedure with colleagues or teachers under their supervision.

No significant relationships were found when the data were statistically analyzed using the chi-square technique. Nominal data indicated strong preference (82%) for the leadership style of high task/high relationship. In the Bi/Polar pair of thinking and risking strengths, 58% of the subjects scored higher in the risking category; in the pair of practical thinking and theoretical thinking strengths,

81% of the subjects scored higher in practical thinking; and in the pair of independent and dependent risking strengths, 55% scored higher in independent risking. Central office staff were evenly divided between thinking and risking strengths, but 63% of the principals scored higher in the risking category.